



Digging It!

August, 2013

Planting for Bees

When you plant tomatoes or zucchinis, do you just assume you'll get fruit? Did it slip your mind that for fruit to appear, pollination must occur? No bees, no tomatoes.



Our native pollinators, the ones that pollinate your tomatoes among them, are decreasing across North America and around the world. Pesticides and disease are possible causes, but one of the biggest causes is loss of habitat. Gardeners everywhere have been spurred into action to help native bees. They're creating habitat by planting for bees in their gardens, in vacant lots, in community gardens, among their crops, and along roadsides.

Your garden can become a haven for bees by providing a source of nectar and pollen, one of the primary needs of bees.

The plants you choose to put into your garden are important to bees. Did you know that many of our

"must haves" or favourite garden plants are highly hybridized and not at all attractive to bees? Hybridizers often sacrifice the nectar and pollen qualities of a plant for more petals, a different shape or size and different colours. Those nifty new plants we buy may have very little bee appeal.

Our Ontario native plants, on the other hand, have been here for thousands of years, and our bees are accustomed to them. Some native bees are so choosy that they won't go near a non-native plant; others are willing to give some non-natives a try. You probably know of one or two non-native plants that you already have that are bee magnets, but on the whole native bees prefer native plants. The native Ontario plants you put in your garden will be far and away bee favourites.



Does this mean that you should give up your favourite hybridized plants and plant only natives to accommodate bees? Emphatically NO! A great idea is to intersperse natives with your other plants or to

set aside a part of your garden for native plants only.

When you plant for native bees, you will want to provide sources of nectar and pollen from early Spring to late Fall. This is a bit of a challenge, but there is lots of information on the web and in reference material to help you choose bee plants by season. Here's a start. For spring plant a flowering shrub such as New Jersey Tea or Chokecherry. Wild strawberry, rock cress and muscari are good early spring sources of pollen. Summer is the easiest season to cover. In summer include such plants as Liatrus and Helenium. Almost all the composite flowers are bee bait. In Fall, you might choose Joe-Pye-Weed, Goldenrods and Asters.

Your native garden needn't be a "duty" patch. It will evolve into a beautiful component of your garden. So this year begin your bee planting. Step one is to realize the need and to establish the will to garden for bees.

But I warn you, once you start planting for bees, you will find it hard to stop. Caring for bees is addictive.

Carol Dunk,

Master Gardener

For more information about bees, contact the Dept of Agriculture.

August TO DO List

- Reduce fertilization to allow plants ample time to harden off before winter.
- Continue to water during dry spells.
- Deadhead annuals and perennials to encourage new growth.
- Keep an eye open for pests that may be planning to hibernate in the debris around your plants.
- Seed areas of the lawn that are thin or dead. Keep the seed well watered while germinating.
- Propagate from seeds or cuttings.

Tip of the Month:

If you are looking for a plant that blooms all season. *Agastache* 'Blue Boa' is definitely a great contender. Paul Zamit of the Toronto Botanical Gardens recommends this plant. For a long and happy show.

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Newsletter of the Simcoe County Ask a Master Gardener books containing answers to your most common gardening questions are available at any of these speaking engagements for only \$10 or Gardening Guides for only \$1. Valuable references for you or as gifts for a gardening friend!

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Master Gardeners of Simcoe County



Where to find us for free gardening advice!

Simcoe County Master Gardener Meeting,

White Pine Board Room, Midhurst, 7:00 pm, September 17, 2013

"Everyone welcome to Heritage Park, Elmvale, Ontario on Wednesday, 21 August at 6:00 pm to enjoy a pot luck supper in conjunction with the Elmvale Hort Society. There will be a dedication ceremony for the placement of a tree & bench in memory of former Master Gardener Kevin Healy"

Bees

Like trains of cars on tracks of plush

I hear the level bee:

A jar across the flowers goes,

Their velvet masonry

Withstands until the sweet assault

Their chivalry consumes,

While he, victorious, tilts away

To vanquish other blooms.

His feet are shod with gauze,

His helmet is of gold;

His breast, a single onyx

With chrysoptera, inlaid.

His labor is a chant,

His idleness a tune;

Oh, for a bee's experience

Of clovers and of noon!

Emily Dickinson

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For information on arranging a lecture for your group please contact Tracy Bosley at 705-435-2608 or email her at tvbosley@rogers.com. For more information on Master Gardeners visit mgoi.ca